

MESOPOTAMIAN MINUTE

- Current News on Agriculture & USDA in Iraq -

Office of Agricultural Affairs, U.S. Embassy, Baghdad

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Veterinary training held at Al- Muthanna College of Agriculture – 26 Veterinarians and veterinary students participated in the event was organized by USDA's Wayne Marcus. Jessica McCoy, USDA veterinarian stationed in Baghdad conducted the training. Topics covered included sheep farm design, breeding management, proper feeding during pregnancy and pregnancy diagnosis. Didactic lectures were followed by a visit to the facility's sheep herd, where students practiced diagnosing pregnancies, ageing sheep, and estimating weights with a tape measure.



Iraqi Traders Participate in Gulfood, Dubai Feb 27- March 2 - To familiarize Iraqi traders with US products and companies, OAA Baghdad organized a group of 31 Iraqi food product company representatives who attended Gulfood, the Middle East's largest and most important event for the food processing and retail industries. Working with USDA Dubai, USDA Baghdad assisted Iraqis company representatives to obtain UAE visas before the show's start and assisted in their orientation to the event. In the course of the show, Iraqi buyers negotiated the purchase of U.S. products ranging from meat and poultry to sunflower seed and confectionary products. With an Iraqi market better positioned to buy consumer-ready food products, we are bullish about the prospects for export sales to Iraq.



Installation of a ridge tillage demonstration test plot in the Agriculture Al Khaseeb Crescent Organization– Rod Brenes, USDA PRT Liaison and Patrick Broyles, USDA Soils Expert accompanied Mary Z. Kerstetter, Ag Advisor from the PRT Baghdad South team as they visited the Agriculture Al Khaseeb Crescent Organization on March 2 to install a ridge tillage demonstration test plot. Pat Broyles used his tape measure and demonstrated how to measure the amount of residue in the field. The 6% of residue counted was far below the desired level of 30%. It was decided to divide the field into three sections. The first plot section will not be weeded. The second plot section will be sprayed with 2-4D herbicide to control weeds. The third plot will be weeded by hand.



USDA Invites Iraqi Agribusiness Leaders To Discuss Market Conditions – USDA hosted 22 agribusiness reps. at the embassy March 7th to exchange views on the business climate for producers, importers, wholesalers, and distributors and to explain how to use the USDA/FAS homepage to source US agricultural products. Among other issues, participants felt the proposed tariff schedule which is postponed will not protect domestic producers given low planned duties and that the GoI will be challenged to enforce the tariffs. Representatives are also eager to increase purchasing from the US and hope some trade finance can be offered, requested adoption of a bilateral veterinary agreement to facilitate imports and lament corruption that affects trade and the conduct of business.

Personnel Update - There are currently 30 USDA personnel in Iraq including those with Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs), at Embassy Baghdad or embedded with U.S. military units.

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